

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 30, 2014

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The Honorable Tom Wheeler  
Chairman  
Federal Communications Commission  
445 12<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20554

Dear Chairman Wheeler:

As former Governors of the Commonwealth of Virginia, and as its current United States Senators, we are committed to bringing affordable, quality broadband to businesses and citizens throughout the Commonwealth. We are encouraged by your recent decision to authorize targeted experiments that focus on bringing broadband service to rural America. In particular, we write to express our support for the 39 expressions of interest submitted by Virginia entities.

Telecommunications services are critical for economic growth, innovation, and U.S. competitiveness. Access to telecommunications services is no longer a luxury but has become a key element of economic infrastructure for Americans. While the number of new broadband subscribers continues to grow, studies and data show that the rate of broadband deployment in urban and high-income areas is outpacing deployment in rural and low-income areas. Nationally, 98 percent of the non-rural population has access to broadband at a benchmark speed of 4 Mbps/1 Mbps. However, in rural areas, only 76 percent of the population has access. This trend is even more pronounced in Virginia, where less than 63 percent of the rural population has access. This divide is unacceptable.

The rural broadband trials proposed by the FCC present an unprecedented opportunity for the Commission to explore how best to accomplish its goal of achieving universal service. As illustrated by the almost 1,000 expressions of interest received by the FCC, there is an overwhelming demand from a diverse set of entities for federal funding to build out broadband networks in the most unserved areas of our nation.

We fully support the expressions of interest submitted by Virginia entities. We ask that as this process moves forward, the applications from the Commonwealth be carefully and favorably considered by the FCC, especially in light of the reality that rural areas in Virginia have lower average levels of service than similar areas nationwide. Finally, we recognize the

significant work that the Commission has done already towards ensuring that all Americans have access to modern communications networks and hope that the proposed trials will enhance these efforts.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark R. Warner". The letters are cursive and fluid.

Mark R. Warner  
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tim Kaine". The letters are cursive and fluid.

Tim Kaine  
United States Senator



OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

May 7, 2014

The Honorable Mark Warner  
United States Senate  
475 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Warner:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Fiber-to-the-Premises (FTTP) broadband deployment proposals that were submitted by thirty-nine entities from Virginia. I appreciate your views and will ensure that your letter will be included in the record of the proceeding and considered as part of the Commission's review.

In a unanimously adopted *Technology Transitions Order* in January, the Commission recognized that particular challenges exist for the deployment of next generation communications services in rural areas. In order to inform our policies on building next generation networks in rural America, the Commission invited parties to submit proposals to determine whether there is interest into constructing high bandwidth networks in rural, high-cost areas, including Tribal lands.

A diverse set of entities have filed nearly 1,000 expressions of interest, including rural telephone companies, electric co-ops, cable and wireless Internet service providers, schools and libraries, research and education networks, and rural communities. The proposals reflect the understanding that high bandwidth services are becoming increasingly important to the future of economic development, education, health care, government services, entertainment, information, communication and creativity.

The Commission currently is reviewing the expressions of interest that have been submitted, and we have sought public comment on a number of rural broadband experiment issues, including the size of the budget and selection criteria to be used in reviewing proposals. After completing a review of the submissions and the record in response to our *Further Notice of Proposed Rulemaking*, the Commission would adopt an Order setting a budget and establishing detailed selection criteria for rural broadband experiments. At that point, we would invite parties, such as the Virginia entities you reference, to submit formal proposals for consideration by Commission staff.

I appreciate your interest in this matter. Please let me know if I can be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Tom Wheeler





OFFICE OF  
THE CHAIRMAN

FEDERAL COMMUNICATIONS COMMISSION  
WASHINGTON

May 7, 2014

The Honorable Tim Kaine  
United States Senate  
388 Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Kaine:

Thank you for your letter regarding the Fiber-to-the-Premises (FTTP) broadband deployment proposals that were submitted by thirty-nine entities from Virginia. I appreciate your views and will ensure that your letter will be included in the record of the proceeding and considered as part of the Commission's review.

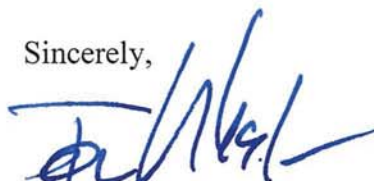
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Sincerely,



Tom Wheeler